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THE ORIGINS OF THE RELIGION
OF ISRAEL.

THE process of mental cultivation, at the close of the nineteenth century, offers few more perplexing problems than *What to do with Herbert Spencer?* “Does anybody read that man now?” said a friend to me the other day. “At Oxford there is a complete change. The young men;—and it is the young who read;—read Rudyard Kipling instead of George Eliot.” “Good!” said another, to whom this dictum was repeated, “but at Oxford they are dreadfully provincial. I mentioned *G. B. S.* in our Common Room, and they did not know whom I meant.” The standpoint, it will be seen, is that of the journalist. Yet even so thoughtful a writer as Mr. Joseph Jacobs makes, as it seems to me, the same mistake. “Darwinism has come, and has conquered, and as a vital influence in the spiritual life, has gone¹. ” As if fashion were the test of truth, and the novelty of a doctrine the criterion of its value. I cannot think that Mr. Spencer’s life-work has lost its significance because it is at last achieved.

In certain quarters there has long existed a tendency to treat “Science” and “Herbert Spencer” as equivalent

¹ George Eliot, &c., Introd., p. xx (1891).

terms, a tendency equally to be observed among Mr. Spencer's disciples and among his opponents. They who know what Science is know that it is greater than any one man, however great; wider in its outlook, more varied in its activities, more flexible and more receptive than any single mind. Above all, Science is essentially progressive, never completely unified, because never complete, never resting in the abstraction, but always pressing on to closer contact with the living reality:—

Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving as the restless spheres¹.

Such minds entertain a certain distrust of philosophical systems. The philosopher who engages to construct a continuous interpretation of the *totum scibile*, is under the necessity of filling up the gaps of science by means of speculation, of making deduction do the work of induction, of occupying himself with the abstractions of his own mind rather than the concrete objects of knowledge, of selecting such data as afford real or apparent support to his hypotheses, while minimizing or ignoring those whose meaning is less easily apprehended from his standpoint. It would be too much to affirm that Mr. Spencer has always escaped these dangers. The best tribute to his work would consist in an edition of the Synthetic Philosophy in which the several volumes should be furnished with Introductions, Notes, and Appendices, by experts in the different subjects of which he has treated, so as to test or to confirm, to supplement or to correct, the conclusions which he has reached and the evidence by which he has supported them; and thus help the reader to distinguish between the permanent and the transitory in this vast fabric of thought. At present there are those who make a bogey of Mr. Spencer,

¹ Marlowe, *Tamburlaine*, part I, act ii, sc. 7.

and those who make a pope of him; who accept his generalizations merely on authority, and turn his formulae into shibboleths, or else consider themselves at liberty to reject his arguments without examination. For my part, *je cherche en gémissant*. Mr. Spencer, like Mr. Ruskin, is admirably stimulating and instructive, provided you do not believe in him. Take nothing on trust, test all that you read, as far as ability and opportunity allow;—you will have learned much, you will have gained thought, and food for thought; but you will finally leave your author to the judgment of posterity. Yet no one can help seeing that Mr. Spencer possesses a mind of singular power, and of limitations almost equally singular; a mind in which the personal equation is too strongly marked for him to serve as an impartial representative of abstract science, a mind capable of crudities, even of absurdities¹; in certain important respects, an uncultivated mind. And, speaking always from the standpoint of the dwarf on the giant's shoulders, I cannot conceal a doubt whether Mr. Spencer has ever *quite* assimilated the doctrine of Evolution. I mean, of course, that there survive in his philosophy elements, assumptions, habits of thought, which are derived from the pre-evolutionary era, and are incompatible with the mental position in which he has done so much to place us. Of these, that which most concerns us here is his attitude of antagonism to the great historical religions, which it is surely the business of science not to attack but to explain.

A different kind of importance attaches to the earlier and the later stages, respectively, of any process, natural or artificial. There is the importance of the primary condition, the indispensable means, and there is that which attaches to the finished result, which, in the case of intelligent agency, is also the end in view. For instance, in

¹ Such, for instance, as the petulant reference to Warren Hastings (*Data of Sociology*, 3rd ed., p. 811) or the ludicrous interpretation of the story of Abraham (*ibid.*, pp. 406 seq. and 817).

building a house it is indispensable to procure the site and the materials, but these have no utility in themselves, and do not fulfil their proper function until the house is complete and ready for habitation. Conversely, while the building cannot be used until the roof and the windows, the fittings and the furniture are all in their places, these parts depend for their utility upon the previous construction of the walls and the foundations. Something like this takes place in the processes of nature. There is the importance of the acorn, and there is that of the oak. It may be true that the latter is implicit in the former, that there is a perfect continuity between them, and that so far the two are identical. But it is not true to say that one is as good as the other, that the acorn is the oak, that the embryo possesses the same importance as the adult, the infant as the hero or the saint. And the evolutionist at large is often so absorbed in the investigation of origins as to forget the significance of results. Moreover the earlier stages in the process of evolution extend over a wider area, and a longer period of time, than the later and more special developments. The almost inconceivable magnitudes, involving correlative duration, of the objects of astronomical science, are thus contrasted with the geological history of the earth's surface; or the history of life in general with that of its higher forms; or that of the class Mammalia with the evolution of the human race; or the antiquity and diffusion of the race with the comparatively recent, local, and transient growth of civilizations. Yet everywhere, as in Von Baer's law, the progress of development is from the general to the special, the species has a significance beyond that of the genus, and in the species it is the differentia with which the student is above all concerned. It is not that which Greek art, for instance, has in common with the art of the Maori, it is, on the contrary, the distinctive excellence of the former, which renders it a subject of special investigation; the work of Praxiteles rather than that of Daedalus.

And, broadly speaking, it is the political and social institutions, the life and manners, the arts and sciences, the languages and literatures, the philosophies and religions, of the higher races, the more advanced civilizations, the fine flower of humanity, which form the main subject of historical science. And it is precisely here that occurs the blind spot in the retina, the deficient sympathy in the mind, of our Synthetic Philosopher. In reading Mr. Spencer's works, we are continually made to feel that he has neither undergone the discipline, nor attained the standpoint, of the historical student¹.

I do not, of course, intend either to deny or to minimize the fundamental importance of the study of origins, or of the comparative method. What I mean to deny is that these possess the same kind of importance as the investigation of special developments; as if the general study of the Mammalia were to be accepted as a substitute for the Science of Man.

In dealing with the Religion of Israel, we may either consider the starting-point of its evolution, viz. that which it has in common with the religion of the ancient world, and trace this back in turn to the religion of savages; or, assuming such an origin, we may fix our attention upon the later stages, the higher developments of the process, those namely to which it owes its unique position and influence in the history of Mankind. Only, when you have explained the former, you have not accounted for the latter. Assume, if you like, with Mr. Grant Allen, what is required by the Spencerian theory of the Origin of Religion, although no evidence can be adduced in support of this particular application, viz. that the God of Israel was in ultimate origin the ghost of an ancestral warrior

¹ Mr. Freeman used to complain of the people who thought that all "the Anglo-Saxons" lived at the same time. Mr. Spence seems to be under a similar delusion with regard to "the Jews" or "the Hebrews." See the references in the *Data of Sociology*, 3rd ed., pp. 136, 154, 171, 173, 174, 190, 191, 192, 194, 217, 221, 227, 229, 239, 240, 261, 371.

chief; you do not thus account for the conception of this deity entertained by the Hebrew Prophets. What have the two terms of the series in common with each other? A ghost "idealized," you say? But it is just the ideal element which is the characteristic feature of the religion, and which alone is of permanent importance. Nor if you can trace Theism in general to a beginning in the fancies of savages, in the childhood of the world, have you thereby afforded a test of its validity, any more than if you were to argue that the validity of chemical science depended on that of mediaeval alchemy, the truth of astronomy upon the superstitions of the Chaldaean astrologer, or the worth of medicine upon that of witchcraft¹? The modest proposition of Hume, *That the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence*; the obvious and insuperable difficulty of deriving consciousness from anything not capable of consciousness; the consequent necessity of supposing with Tyndall that the promise and potency of Life and Mind were once latent in the sun's fires; the inevitable inference to the doctrine of Spinoza that Thought and Extension are but modes of a single substance; the problem of the relation between the ultimate reality, the unknown but infinite power of Mr. Spencer's philosophy, and the ideal capacities and aspirations of humanity: all these would, in the case supposed, remain exactly where they were.

And as with Theism so with Immortality. In either case the history of religion has to deal with the multiform modes in which the mind of man has shaped "the mystery from which it has emerged"², and to which it is destined to return. But the mystery abides unchanged.

Lo, his adventurous fancy coercing at once and provoking,
Rise the unscalable walls, built with a word at the prime;
Lo, immobile as statues, with pitiless faces of iron,
Armed at each obstinate gate, stand the impassable guards³.

¹ See Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus*, vol. II, chap. x *ad init.*

² Tyndall, *Belfast Address*.

³ William Watson, *Hymn to the Sea*.

The beginning of mental life is as obscure as its close, and the interdependence of Body and Mind remains equally certain and inscrutable. For Mr. Grant Allen, whose lamented and premature death has occurred since this paper was first commenced, the problems which have baffled the intellects of a Spencer, a Huxley, or a Tyndall, and have forced upon them the heroic recognition of the limits of our knowledge and the abyss which surrounds our transitory life, had no existence.

"We now know," he writes (*Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 46), "that consciousness is a function of the brain ; that it is intermittent during sleep, when the brain rests, and also during times of grave derangement of the nervous or circulatory systems, as when we faint or assume the comatose condition, or are stunned by a blow, or fall into catalepsy or epilepsy. We also know that consciousness ceases altogether at death, when the brain no longer functions ; and that the possibility of its further continuance is absolutely cut off by the fact of decomposition."

He knows now, or perhaps even he does not know. I gladly turn to the language of a more scientific thinker (Huxley, *Science and Morals*, Collected Essays, IX, 140) :—

As physical science states this problem, it seems to stand thus : "Is there any means of knowing whether the series of states of consciousness, which has been causally¹ associated for threescore years and ten with the arrangement and movements of innumerable millions of successively different material molecules, can be continued, in like association, with some substance which has not the properties of matter and force ?" As Kant said, on a like occasion, if anybody can answer that question, he is just the man I want to see. If he says that consciousness cannot exist, except in relation of cause and effect with certain organic molecules, I must ask how he knows that ; and if he says it can, I must put the same question.

The work of Mr. Grant Allen (published in 1897), in spite of its bulk, was but a preliminary sketch of a far more extensive design, the "*avant-courrier* of a reasoned system," for which he had collected materials during more

¹ Misprinted "casually" in the Collected Edition.

than twenty years. In this respect it may not unfairly be compared to *The Origin of Species*. But here the resemblance ends. The admirable modesty of Darwin, his flawless candour, his painstaking thoroughness, are alike absent. Nor is a comparison with *The Data of Sociology* more favourable in its results. The ponderous chariot of Mr. Spencer is drawn onwards by two powerful steeds, the Love of System and the Love of Truth; and a looker-on may observe that the Love of System is a little given to pulling, and does more than his share of the work. But Mr. Grant Allen drives tandem, and drives it furiously, and if Love of Truth occupies the wheeler's place, the leader is Love of Effect, and lashed by his reckless charioteer, he prances all across the road to the alarm of the bystanders and the danger of the coach. To drop the metaphor, we may say that as Mr. Spencer is always a philosopher and sometimes a man of science, so Mr. Grant Allen was sometimes a man of science, but always, and at all costs, a journalist. And, alas! a journalist with the vulgar and puerile ambition of shocking the public whom presumably he addressed. The consequence is a volume which if it falls into the hands of the secularist will mislead him as to the present position of historical science, while in religious minds it is likely to create a prejudice against the whole investigation, and by the serious student to be neglected altogether. And yet this would be a pity. In spite of its glaring faults, the book has real merit. It is valuable as a supplement to the work of Mr. Spencer, and also to that of Mr. Frazer. An acute, original, and active intelligence, equipped with wide reading and observation, occupying itself during many years with the obscure and complex data of this vast subject and the problems which they present to the inquirer, could not but throw fresh light upon them, could not but afford the reader both stimulus and suggestion.

The general theory of the Origin of Religion held by Mr. Spencer and his disciples, it is well known, is that the

Worship of the Gods is in ultimate analysis a Worship of the Dead. Every god was once a dead man.

There is no exception then. Using the phrase ancestor-worship in its broadest sense as comprehending all worship of the dead, be they of the same blood or not, we conclude that ancestor-worship is the root of every religion (*Data of Sociology*, § 204, *ad fin.*).

I will add a few eloquent sentences from Mr. Grant Allen:—

Thus, in ultimate analysis, we see that all the sacred objects of the world are either dead men themselves, as corpse, mummy, ghost, or god; or else the tomb where such men are buried; or else the temple, shrine, or hut which covers the tomb; or else the tomb-stone, altar, image, or statue, standing over it and representing the ghost; or else the stake, idol, or household god which is fashioned as their deputy; or else the tree which grows above the barrow; or else the well, or tank, or spring, natural or artificial, by whose side the dead man has been laid to rest. In one form or another, from beginning to end, we find only, in Mr. William Simpson's graphic phrase, "the Worship of Death," as the basis and root of all human religion (*Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 153).

In short, from first to last, religion never gets far away from these its earliest and profoundest associations. "God and immortality," those two are its key-notes. And those two are one; for the god in the last resort is nothing more than the immortal ghost, etherealized and extended (*ibid.*, p. 432).

In the formal rhythm, the comprehensive precision, the melancholy dogmatism, the air of finality, by which these statements are characterized there is something which recalls the Athanasian Creed, and Mr. Grant Allen's last word upon the fate of Man is *absque dubio peribit in aeternum*. It is curious to compare his view with that of Mr. Lang:—

On the hypothesis here offered to criticism there are two chief sources of religion, (1) the belief—how attained we know not—in a powerful, moral, eternal, omniscient Father and Judge of men; (2) the belief—probably developed out of experiences normal and supernormal—in somewhat of man which may survive the grave (*Making of Religion*, p. 331).

Mr. Lang alone among anthropologists has adduced evidence of the former class of beliefs as independent of the latter. All that is brought forward by Mr. Spencer or Mr. Allen belongs (with the exclusion of the "supernormal") to the second category. But the author of *The Evolution of the Idea of God* imported some serious relaxations into the Spencerian dogma. One of these is the proposition (*ibid.*, p. 269) that "the great gods appear to be rather classes than individuals."

That there were many Nymphs and many Fauni, many Silvani and many Martes, has long been known; it is beginning to be clear that there were also many Saturns, many Jupiters, many Junones, many Vestae...There were many Hermae and many Termini, not in Greece and Italy alone, but throughout the world. Only much later did a generalized god, Hermes or Terminus, arise from the union into a single abstract concept of all these separate and individual deities (*ibid.*, p. 270). Each Terminus and each Silvanus is thus the god or protecting ghost of each boundary stone or each sacred grove—not a proper name, but a class—not a particular god, but a *kind* of spirit. The generalized and abstract gods are later unifications of all the individuals included in each genus (*ibid.*, pp. 371-2).

While the בָּעֵלִים of the Old Testament, whatever their origin, are just such a class of deities as here described, the existence of a generalized בָּעֵל appears problematical, and the question is complicated by the applicability of this title to any god, even the God of Israel. On the other hand it may be asked whether the singular use of the plural אלְהִים may not be explained by the subsumption of particular gods into one general conception. And Mr. Lang (*Making of Religion*, p. 232) quotes from Macdonald's *Africana* a statement that Mulungu, or Mlungu, used as a proper name, "is said to be the great spirit, *msimu*, of all men, a spirit formed by adding all the departed spirits together."

In his attempt to trace the origin of the gods to the ghost of the human ancestor or victim, Mr. Allen encounters a difficulty:—

But how reconcile this idea with the existence of numerous petty functional deities—gods of the door and the hinge?—with the Cumina who guards the child in the cradle, and the Statina who takes care of him when he begins to stand? I answer, all these are but adjectival gods, mere ghosts or spirits, unknown in themselves, but conceived as exercising this particular function. “The god that does so-and-so” is just a convenient expression (*ibid.*, p. 371).

Yes, but the expression has a meaning and implies an assumption, the existence of personal, spiritual agents, not identified with any individual human being, nor explicitly conceived as human in origin. Again, when Mr. Grant Allen tells us, “The Jupiter or Jovis was a multiple wine-god, doubtless in every case the annual victim slain, Dionysus-wise, for the benefit of the vineyard . . . But his name shows that, as usual, he was also identified with that very ancient Sky-god who is common to all the Aryan race:” it is manifest that the Sky-god still remains to be accounted for. And here we approach the weakest part of the Spencerian theory—the endeavour to deduce the Worship of Nature in all its various aspects from that of the Spirit of Man. This part of the *Data of Sociology* is one long tissue of special pleading. Of course Mr. Spencer has no difficulty in showing that in some cases the spirits supposed to control or animate the phenomena of Nature are regarded as human both in character and origin. But that is not enough to satisfy him. He seeks to show that the Worship of Nature is everywhere a mere accidental consequence of ancestor-worship.

Here we have, in Mr. Spencer’s own words, “the unchecked application of an hypothesis which seems to explain everything” (*Data of Sociology*, p. 321). The synthetic philosopher is for ever “verifying *a priori* inference by *a posteriori* proof” (*ibid.*, p. 413), like the judges of a French court-martial. “Integration must be set up by the recognition of some conspicuous typical case. When, into a heap of detached observations, is introduced an observation akin to them in which a causal relation is discernible,

it forthwith commences assimilating to itself from this heap of observations, those which are congruous ; *and tends even to coerce into union those of which the congruity is not manifest* (*ibid.*, p. 121). The italics are not Mr. Spencer's. "Every hypothesis tends to assimilate facts yielding it support and to reject adverse facts" (*ibid.*, p. 289). "Not only has hypothesis an effect conspicuous to all in perverting judgment, but it has an effect, less manifest but still decided, in perverting perception" (*ibid.*, p. 766).

These passages help us to understand why Mr. Spencer must needs attribute the widely-diffused cult of the living personal Heaven, or of the spirit supposed to animate it, to the contingency of some hypothetical conquering chief, credited by a subject race with the magical power of causing or withholding rain and tempest, establishing himself in some mountain stronghold, and being on that account supposed to reside in Heaven (*ibid.*, pp. 210-212, 805-807). The conception of a sky-god could never have been accepted, modified, and diffused, unless it had been congruous with the current mode of thought. And it is that mode of thought which we desire to explain. On the most favourable view the hypothesis may be regarded as offering what mathematicians call a singular solution, which is valid only for the special case supposed. And so with regard to the yet more superficial theory which attempts to trace the worship of animals, of plants, and of what we call inanimate nature (speaking from a point of view which is not that of man in the mythological stage) to mere verbal misunderstanding ; a theory which doubtless owes its place in the philosophy of Mr. Spencer, with which it is otherwise sufficiently incongruous, to the mischievous influence of the philologists, with their preposterous assumption that language is prior to thought. The supposed misunderstanding could not have occurred unless the objects of nature were regarded as personal beings. For a rock to be thought of as a parent, it must first be thought of as alive. That the worship of the Sun

and Moon is to be traced to "misinterpretation of individual names" (*Data of Sociology*, p. 379); that "solar myths have arisen from misapprehensions of narratives respecting actual persons, or actual events in human history" (*ibid.*, p. 377); that "One source of these solar myths is the literal acceptance of figurative statements concerning the quarter whence the race came" (*ibid.*); that "emergence of a people from a forest, confounded in tradition with emergence from the trees forming it, has led to the worship of trees as ancestors" (*ibid.*); that "the story of migration from a distant mountain has become, through defect of language, changed into the story of descent from the mountain as a progenitor" (*ibid.*); and that clans named after the bear, the prairie-wolf, the rattlesnake and the hare (*ibid.*, p. 356) "have severally descended from men called after, and eventually identified with these animals": these are hypotheses which, to-day, are not likely to find favour with students of the mind of man. Accordingly, Mr. Grant Allen adopted a more tenable position:—

Once more, I do not wish to insist, either, that every particular and individual god, national or naturalistic, must necessarily represent a particular ghost—the dead spirit of a single definite once-living person. It is enough to show, as Mr. Spencer has shown, that the idea of the god, and the worship paid to a god, are directly derived from the idea of the ghost, and the offerings made to the ghost, without necessarily holding, as Mr. Spencer seems to hold, that every god is and must be, in ultimate analysis, the ghost of a particular human being. Once the conception of gods had been evolved by humanity, and had become a common part of every man's imagined universe—of the world as it presented itself to the mind of the percipient—then it was natural enough that new gods should be made from time to time out of abstractions or special aspects and powers of nature, and that the same worship should be paid to such new-made and purely imaginary gods as had previously been paid to the whole host of gods evolved from personal and tribal ancestors (*Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 36).

It seems to me indubitable, that after the idea of godhead had become fully fixed in the human mind, some gods at least began to be recognized who were directly framed either from abstract concep-

tions, from natural objects, or from pure outbursts of the mythopoetic faculty (*ibid.*, p. 174).

But such a concession is the very enfranchisement of animism. You admit the conception of gods or spirits, analogous to the spirit of man, yet not human in origin, nor bounded by the limitations of human nature. In taking the step supposed, religion has passed the barrier which separates man and god. The "magnified and non-natural man" thus conceived by the human mind is an adumbration of the belief that, in the words of Mr. Spencer, "the Power manifested throughout the Universe distinguished as material, is the same power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness¹." And the being or beings thus conceived may possess not only a speculative significance as hypothetical causes of the phenomena of the universe, but also an ethical and poetic value as the embodiment of human ideals. By such a concession Mr. Grant Allen destroyed his demonstration of atheism. The only questions still at issue are whether this mode of thought is original or derivative, and whether a particular cult is to be referred to "ancestor-worship" or to "animism²." But I must remark that even on the strictest Spencerian view, a point is at last reached, at which the worship of an individual human spirit loses its original character and gives place to the purely ideal conception of a god. So the ideal of the Christ has replaced the historical personality of Jesus of Nazareth; so, on the theory of Mr. Spencer and Mr. Allen, the conception of the God of Israel has superseded the spirit of some far-off tribal ancestor.

In order to be quite fair to Mr. Spencer and his followers, we must bear in mind that while the author of *Primitive Culture* has been principally concerned to exhibit what we may call the Scheme of Animism, and the place in that

¹ "Religion : A Retrospect and Prospect," *Nineteenth Century*, Jan., 1884.

² Mr. Lang would raise a third, viz. whether the notion of the anthropomorphic god was not prior to that of the separable soul.

scheme of various classes of belief and practice, it is rather the object of Mr. Spencer to account for the origin of Animism itself. So, too, Mr. Allen, towards the close of his *μέγα βιβλίον* (*ibid.*, p. 437), observes:—

I do not deny the actual existence of that profoundly animistic frame of mind which Mr. Im Thurn has so well depicted among the Indians of Guiana; nor that which exists among the Samoyeds of Siberia; nor that which meets us at every turn in historical accounts of the old Roman religion. I am quite ready to admit that to people at that stage of religious evolution, the world seems simply thronged with spirits on every side, each of whom has often his own special functions and peculiar prerogatives. But I fail to see that any one of these ideas is demonstrably primitive.

Few words have been so much abused as “primitive.” What is meant by Primitive Man? From the point of view of evolution the term can only mean, man during the undefined period of his gradual emergence from the condition of the ape. But no one except Dr. Westermarck ever seems to use it in this sense. Nor is any direct evidence available as to the psychology of man at this epoch. Just as in English History we have hardly any contemporary evidence bearing on the Saxon Conquest of Britain, and are left to form our ideas of that process from what we know of the prior conditions and the ultimate results, with some light from the analogy of the subsequent invasions of the Danes; so our conception of the state of primitive man must be formed by inference and conjecture from our knowledge of its antecedents and results, with some light from the later stages of his progress, and from the analogous evolution of the individual. If we speak of Primitive Religion or Primitive Animism, we can only mean the beginnings of Religion or of Animism respectively; and just as if we discuss the beginnings of Life, we are obliged to suppose a period before life existed, so in the parallel case we must suppose a stage of thought in which animism had its first beginnings. In § 67 of his *Data of Sociology*, Mr. Spencer states this question:—

"How, then, are we to explain his superstitions?" it will be asked. "That these habitually imply the ascription of life to things not alive, is undeniable. If the primitive man has no proclivity to this confusion, how is it possible to explain the extreme prevalence, if not the universality, of beliefs which give personalities, and tacitly ascribe animation, to multitudes of inanimate things?"

The reply is that these cannot be primary beliefs, but must be secondary beliefs into which the primitive man is betrayed during his early attempts to understand the surrounding world. The incipiently speculative stage must come after a stage in which there is no speculation . . . During this stage the primitive man no more tends to confound animate with inanimate than inferior creatures do.

Animism, then, is the product of reflection. And here we may cite Mr. Spencer's acute observation that "The implications of a doctrine do not occur to the utterly stupid; but they become obvious to those who begin to think" (*Data of Sociology*, p. 316). And in this process of thought the first step is the conception of the spirit of man; the ghost, as Mr. Spencer says, is the *type* (*ibid.*, p. 417). On a page already cited Mr. Grant Allen lays down that "only after the concept of a god had been formed from ancestor-cult, and only after worship had been evolved from the customary offerings to the mummy or spirit at the tomb, could any other object by any possibility be elevated to the godhead" (*Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 174). Animism, on this view, is derivative, posterior to ancestor-worship both in order of thought and in order of time. Is this necessarily the case? May not the conception of the human spirit and that of spirits analogous thereto, and the worship of both, have developed *pari passu*?

Let us consider this point more closely.

Of the various experiences which, according both to Dr. Tylor and Mr. Spencer, have combined to suggest and to define the notion of the Soul, the phenomena of shadows and reflections are common to man's body with all solid objects. The echo answers the cry of wild animals no less than the voice of man, and at this day it is said the bull on the Yorkshire moors is maddened by its response to his

own bellowings ; a circumstance which reminds one of the amenities interchanged between the journals of rival nations. The experience of the dreamer has a double aspect. The dreaming subject wanders, in imagination, from the place where his body is cast in sleep, and though we may notice the indications of dream in the hound beside the hearth, man prior to the domestication of animals cannot so easily have made this observation. But among the objects which present themselves to the sleeper's fancy, animals must from the first have held a conspicuous place. The beasts from whom he had fled, equally with those which he had chased or snared, had killed, and perhaps devoured, must often have appeared to him side by side with his living or dead comrades, with the absent friend and the slain enemy. And if in the case of human phantasms such appearances suggested the conception of the separable Soul or Double, equally must they have done so in the case of animals. The experience of the day would confirm the inference. The contrast between sleep and waking, between life and death, and the dependence of life upon the integrity of the vital organs and functions, which in the case of man has led to the identification of the spirit with the breath or with the blood, with the head or with the heart ; these were common to mankind with their fellow creatures. The conclusion was not to be avoided : "the animal has a ghost" (*Data of Sociology*, § 96. Compare, for dreams of animals pursuing and pursued, § 69 of the same work). And indeed there is abundant evidence to show that to early man animals are indeed *animalia*, animated, or as we should say, spiritual beings, no less than himself. He has no reason to draw, nor does he draw in fact, any distinction in kind between the spirit of man and that of the beast. But as his own personality alone is known to him from within, he must needs conceive the animal soul as human in character, and it must be admitted that he sometimes regards it as human also in origin. At this point the doctrine of transformation comes into importance.

It is enough for my purpose to point out that we are hardly entitled to say that the conception of the soul is, even in the first instance, exclusively, though it may be predominantly, human.

Nor can it have escaped man's observation that there is a kind of life in the tree and in the plant, and this life too might be conceived after the analogy of his own. It has been observed with much force, both by Mr. Spencer and Mr. Grant Allen, that the tree-spirit is not thought of as an image or phantasm of the tree, but is conceived as possessing human form (*Data of Sociology*, § 182).

Again it has been shown that the multitudinous spirits, whose agency is thought of as underlying the phenomena of external nature, are, at least in some instances, conceived as spirits of the dead (*Data of Sociology*, p. 216). And it is here no doubt that a disciple of Mr. Spencer must seek the transition from primitive "ancestor-worship" to derivative "animism." Fetishism here supplies the link required. Evidence is adduced (*ibid.*, §§ 160, 161, and App. A, p. 789) to show "that the fetich-worship is the worship of a special soul supposed to have taken up its abode in the fetich" (*ibid.*, p. 313), and that "Whether the fetich is a bundle of things belonging to a relative who has died, or an effigy of this deceased person, or an idol that has lost historic individuality, or some other object, the resident spirit is nothing but a modification of an ancestral ghost, deviating more or less according to circumstances" (*ibid.*, p. 314). "Beliefs thus originating are aided by the idea that shadows are souls. As we before saw (*ibid.*, § 96), this idea into which primitive men are naturally betrayed, they extend to other shadows than those cast by their own bodies." Here it may be observed that the notion that the shadow of a tree or stone is its soul, contradicts the conception which invests the indwelling spirit with human form and attributes. But the doctrine of transformation, which plays so large a part in mythology and folk-lore, is capable of reconciling the discrepancy. The soul, it may

be supposed, which ordinarily assumes the shape of stone or tree, or appears as its shadow or reflection, is equally capable of taking the form of man. A good instance of such a mode of thought occurs in the *Data of Sociology*, p. 766 (App. A). "Speaking of a distant stump mistaken for a man, an Australian said to Mr. Cameron—'That fellow was a gumatch [ghost], only when you came up he made himself like a stump'" (*J. A. S.*, XIV, 363).

So far then, it may appear that the belief in, and worship of, the Spirits of the Dead supply a *vera causa* for the animism described by Dr. Tylor. Ancestor-worship both exists and gives rise to *some* animism. The hypothesis is legitimate; but does it cover the whole field?

Perhaps the most questionable part of Mr. Spencer's treatment of this subject lies in his conception of the psychology of primitive man. It is impossible here to acquit Mr. Spencer of "automorphic interpretations" (*ibid.*, § 51). He constantly imputes himself. He attributes to primitive man his own literalism and his own rationalism. He thinks of him as forming his beliefs almost exclusively by reasoning from observed data (*ibid.*, § 52). He pictures him as reflecting on the occurrence of fossils, and drawing large inferences from the metamorphoses of insects; compiling, in short, from the sources open to him, his peculiar system of Synthetic Philosophy. Yet, when in "The Man *versus* The State" Mr. Spencer deals with the politics of civilization, he indulges in the cynical reflection, "The postulate that men are rational beings continually leads one to draw inferences which prove to be extremely wide of the mark" (*ibid.*, p. 69). If this is true of civilized and adult man, far more must it be true of the savage and the child. Are any of us perfectly rational, always governed by reason, and always reasoning correctly? Do the intellectual faculties of all men stand on the same level? Has the reasoning power no history? Is not its evolution still in progress? If we wish to form a probable conception of the workings of man's mind at an early stage of his development, we

must, I venture to think, assign a larger place to the influence of emotion, the suggestions of desire and fear, the creations of the imagination, the play of fancy, and even the love of make-believe than Mr. Spencer appears to admit. He denies to primitive man the possession either of speculative curiosity or of constructive imagination.

§ 39 *ad fin.* Such imagination as the primitive man has . . . is reminiscent only, not *constructive*.

§ 46 *ad init.* Along with absence of surprise there goes absence of curiosity. . . . Where curiosity exists we find it among races of not so low a grade. . . . The general fact thus exemplified is one quite at variance with current ideas respecting the thoughts of the primitive man. He is commonly pictured as theorizing about surrounding appearances, whereas in fact, the need for explanations of them does not occur to him.

§ 47. One more general trait must be named—I mean the lack of constructive imagination.

If the propositions here cited are meant to apply to that stage of man's development of which Mythology is the product and the monument, they are demonstrably erroneous. We need only refer to the large and well-known class of aetiological myths, of which the characteristic feature is, that in them the constructive imagination of early man is employed to satisfy his speculative curiosity. Many instances are given in Mr. Spencer's own work, especially in Appendix A. See in particular the section (pp. 767-72) on "Some Early Interpretations," and note that the mythical interpretation of eclipses is here expressly described as one that "arises naturally in *primitive* minds" (p. 770 *ad init.* Cp. 771, last par. "in *primitive* thought"). It is indeed possible that between the composition of the text and that of the appendix Mr. Spencer may have modified his views. But he still persists in regarding the mythical agents as "natural," even in the case of giants whose movements cause earthquakes (p. 770), beings "mightier than men" who are supposed to inhabit the craters of Alaska; or that delightful conception of the Lamas "that the Earth rests on a golden frog, and whenever

this prodigious frog had occasion to scratch its head, or stretch out its foot, that part of the earth immediately above was shaken" (*ibid.*). Providence, which assigns strange compensations to the various destinies of men, has bestowed upon the Lamas a sense of humour which it has denied to Mr. Spencer. The truth is, I conceive, that in dealing with these wild fancies, the distinction between natural and supernatural is wholly out of place, nor is it probable that it exists in the minds of the thinkers who entertain them. They are pure creatures of the imagination. But if this be admitted we are at once brought to consider the existence of gods (in Mr. Grant Allen's words) "purely imaginary," "pure outbursts of the mythopoeic faculty." Before entering on this part of our subject it may, however, be well to take notice of certain psychological admissions of Mr. Spencer, and their consequences.

"A child's vocabulary," writes Mr. Spencer (*Data of Sociology*, p. 361), "consists mainly of words referring to those living beings *which chiefly affect it*." May it not be equally true that a child's thoughts of existence and agency are framed on the same models? "The poorer a language the more metaphorical it is." Be it so; but does not this point to the prior employment of metaphor as a mode of thought? And what precisely is metaphor? There is, I venture to think, a profound difference between the conscious use of metaphor by civilized and educated man, and its employment by the less developed intellects of the ancient and the savage world. If Mr. Spencer, for instance, should condescend to the use of metaphor, we may be sure that he would carefully distinguish the terms of the comparison, and bear in mind that they probably agreed only in the special point in view. The uncivilized man, on the contrary, would be likely, for the purpose in hand, to identify the things compared and neglect their differences. But it appears to me improbable that "among primitive peoples speaking more figuratively than we do" (*ibid.*, pp. 379, 380), and where figurative names are still in

common use, the literal misapprehension of such names and statements should be so general as to give rise to extensive departments of mythology. Such mistakes would be much more natural to Mr. Spencer than they would be, for instance, to a Samoan¹. Where "Rising Sun" is employed as a personal name, why in the world should it be supposed to mean anything else? And how could the Sun be regarded as an ancestor if he were not, in the first instance, thought of as alive?

Another point in Mr. Spencer's psychology which deserves attention is the importance attached to dreams. "Primitive men," we are told (*ibid.*, p. 773), "will inevitably confuse dream-thoughts and the thoughts of the waking state." But if this be so, then in discussing the latter we must allow for an element, at once fanciful and irrational, derived from the former. And last, but not least, we have to allow something for deliberate fiction, like the child's play alluded to at pp. 129, 130, or the make-believe of the savage described at pp. 788, 789.

Upon closing this imperfect examination of Mr. Spencer's views, it may be as well to take account of a singular fallacy of Mr. Grant Allen's, which, if admitted, would exclude from the purview of the student of religion all inquiry into the mental conceptions of the worshipper.

A god, as I understand the word, and as the vast mass of mankind has always understood it, is a supernatural being *to be revered and worshipped* (*Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 21).

If you were to ask almost any intelligent and unsophisticated child, "What is religion?" he would answer off hand, with the clear vision of youth, "Oh, it's saying your prayers, and reading your Bible, and singing hymns, and going to church or to chapel on Sundays." If you were to ask any intelligent and unsophisticated Hindu peasant the same question, he would answer in almost the self-same spirit, "Oh, it is doing poojah regularly, and paying your dues every day to Mahadeo." If you were to ask any simple-minded African savage, he would similarly reply, "It is giving the gods flour and oil, and native

¹ This seems to me a real difficulty in the hypothesis of Turner, cited *Data of Sociology*, pp. 796, 797.

beer, and goat mutton." And finally, if you were to ask a devout Italian contadino, he would instantly say, "It is offering up candles and prayers to the Madonna, attending mass, and remembering the saints on every festa."

And they would all be quite right (*ibid.*, pp. 21, 22).

In short, I maintain that religion is not mainly, as the mistaken analogy of Christian usage makes us erroneously call it, Faith or Creed, but simply and solely Ceremony, Custom, or Practice (*ibid.* p. 32).

Mr. Hartland's comment shall be cited (*Folk-Lore*, IX, 64): "Now be it observed, we may disagree with this definition; we may prefer to define religion for theological or philosophical purposes in a different manner; but we cannot profitably argue with a scientific writer unless we are agreed upon the use of terms." This seems to me an inadequate criticism. We are dealing with a real subject, which has an unity of its own, and includes various inter-dependent parts. Mr. Allen deliberately put forward a single province of this subject as equivalent to the whole, not only excluding from view all the higher aspects of religion, but ignoring the very basis on which ritual itself rests: the mental conceptions and habits of thought which prompt the ritual observance. This may be effective, if somewhat insolent, journalism, but it is not science and ought not to be called so. The passages which I have cited do in fact show a certain grasp of the concrete external data of the subject under investigation; but to *render these intelligible* you must go behind them. If Mr. Grant Allen were right, his book should have been called *The Evolution of Ritual*; for the Idea of God is just what his definition of religion leaves out of sight. Of course, therefore, the writer soon deserts his ostensible standpoint, and proceeds like everybody else to examine the beliefs and motives of the worshipper, and even when it suits him has recourse to the mythology which he affects to condemn (*Evolution of the Idea of God*, pp. 209, 307).

Probably other readers of Mr. Spencer besides myself have sometimes wondered whether he does not err in

a point fundamental to his philosophy—his conception of the nature of a *fact*. The word is very often on his lips ; what does he mean by it ? Mr. Spencer seems to think of a fact as of a thing separable from all other things, capable of being understood with little reference to its circumstances and antecedents, of being precisely ascertained and correctly transmitted by the observer, and colligated or interpreted by the philosopher who receives his testimony, without any consideration being given to the modes of thought habitual to one or the other, and the manner in which these may affect not only their judgment or opinion, but their apprehension and conception of the "fact" observed. When the facts in question are themselves the mental conceptions of peoples in a stage of development very unlike that of the witness ; when they represent a mode of thought far as the poles asunder from that of the philosopher who seeks to explain them ; such an assumption is likely to yield imperfect and erroneous results. Mr. Spencer's lack of emotion, his lack of imagination, involve a defect of sympathy, which is at times equivalent to a defect of intelligence. His competence to appreciate the ideal elements of religion may be judged from the frigid remark (*Data of Sociology*, § 108), "The desire for approbation, which is a ruling passion here, is represented as being a ruling passion hereafter. The giving of praise and receiving of approval are figured as the chief sources of happiness." The writer who penned that sentence is manifestly incapable of apprehending what is meant by the saying of Wordsworth :—

We live by admiration, hope, and love,

or by that of Mr. Ruskin, that "All great art is praise" ; or yet again by the words of the parable of Jesus, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy lord." It is as if a deaf-mute were to write a theory of music.

The evolutionist may perhaps reply that the ethical and

imaginative elements did not exist in the religion of primitive man. At what point then did they supervene, and from what cause? We want evidence to show, and it is here that we are under an obligation to Mr. Lang¹. If we may accept his data, and his interpretation of those data—and to estimate either requires a special knowledge of anthropological material which can hardly be expected from the student of the Old Testament—many among the lowest races of mankind have entertained the conception of a being, analogous indeed to man, but not of human origin, not a human ancestor, since these races do not practise ancestor-worship, not propitiated by sacrifice, not regarded as having died, but on the contrary as prior to the coming of Death; a Maker of all things, a Father of mankind, who is invoked at the mysteries, and under whose sanction are placed the obligations of tribal morality. Such a being, according to Mr. Lang, is not necessarily conceived as a spirit (*Making of Religion*, pp. 182, 183), that is, I suppose, as a separable soul, in terms of the theory of animism. “We shall show that he probably was not; that the question ‘spirit or not spirit’ was not raised at all.” To illustrate this point Mr. Lang refers to the Banks Islanders (Melanesia) who “believe in ghosts, ‘and in the existence of beings who were not, and never had been, human’ . . . They never were men, ‘the natives will always maintain that he (the *Vui*) was *something different*, and deny to him the fleshly body of a man,’ while resolute that he was *not a ghost*.” The importance of this point in Mr. Lang’s view is that such a conception may be prior to the rise of animism or even ancestor-worship. If so, it must be regarded, I suppose, as an “outburst of the mythopoeic faculty,” in which the imagination of early man answers to the best of its ability the

¹ *The Making of Religion*, 1898, chaps. ix-xvii. Cp. *Folk-Lore*, vol. IX, p. 290, “The ‘High Gods’ of Australia,” by E. S. Hartland; vol. X, p. 1, “Reply,” and p. 46, “Rejoinder”; *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, new ed., 1899, Preface, and chaps. xi, xii.

problem of speculative curiosity, Who made the world ? A god so conceived is no doubt, in Mr. Grant Allen's words, "purely imaginary." But so is the Demeter of Cnidos, or the Farnese Hermes, the Sistine Madonna, or the Christ of Leonardo da Vinci. It is the ideal element in these conceptions which is of value. Mr. Lang does show us what Mr. Spencer and Mr. Allen have failed to show, the presence of this element in the early stages of the evolution of religion.

To maintain the ethical character of these "Supreme Beings" free from unworthy associations, Mr. Lang has to resort to the distinction between "Religion" and "Mythology," making good his point by reference to the gods of Homer: "Zeus protects Homeric morality despite his own mythology." He might have cited M. Maspero on the gods of Egypt (*Dawn of Civilization*, p. 160):—

The raillery in which the Egyptians occasionally indulged with regard to them, the good-humoured and even ridiculous *rôles* ascribed to them in certain legends, do not prove that they were despised, or that zeal for them had cooled. The greater the respect of believers for the objects of their worship, the more easily do they tolerate the taking of such liberties; and the condescension of the members of the Ennead¹, far from lowering them in the eyes of generations who came too late to live with them upon familiar terms, only enhanced the love and reverence in which they were held.

Newman, I think, has said something analogous as to the irreverent familiarities of mediaeval and South-European Catholicism². But undoubtedly this play of fancy is incompatible with the noble seriousness which is common to Hebraism and Puritanism. And it is fair to ask with Mr. Hartland, what is the distinction between religious belief and myth? We need some criterion which

¹ The Nine Gods.

² The *Athenaeum*, Dec. 2, 1899, p. 769, reviews, under "Drama," a recent edition of *The Towneley Plays*. I quote one sentence: "In the miracle-plays, the first forms of popular dramatic art, the free English humour played with its characteristic mediaeval non-reverence round the outlines of a fixed sacred story."

shall be not merely arbitrary. Perhaps it is sufficient for our purpose to recognize in these workings of the human imagination the beginnings of the ideal, and to distinguish it from what is merely fanciful or superstitious, humorous, grotesque, or obscene.

But whence is this ideal element derived? Mr. Lang suggests that a Maker of the world and men, and of all things necessary for human subsistence, a "Giver of all good gifts," in fact, is necessarily regarded as benevolent. It is tempting to go further, and seek in such a conception the idea, so familiar to ourselves, of a Father who loves, nourishes, protects, admonishes, and chastens his children¹. But such an idea could not well arise under the matriarchal system, where paternity, it is supposed, was unrecognized or ignored. It might, however, be referred to the state of pretribal monogamy sketched by Westermarck². For us the idea of Our Father in Heaven is the object of those aspirations and emotions which we especially intend by the name of religion, and into which, it may be remarked in passing, neither Mr. Spencer nor Mr. Allen has shown the faintest insight. But are we justified in attributing the germs of such feelings to the savage worshipper of Baiame or Daramulun?

On the other hand, the evolutionist may say: Morality is the nature of things, the condition of human well-being. Without some kind and degree of social ethics no tribe could continue to exist, much less could it overcome its enemies or increase in wealth and numbers. Where, as with early man, every part of human life has its religious aspect or counterpart, ethics, like everything else, will be associated with religion. And where social organization is

¹ *Making of Religion*, p. 183.

² Compare Mr. Spencer's deduction (*Data of Sociology*, p. 63), "that primitive men, who, before any arts of life were developed, necessarily lived on wild food, implying wide dispersion of small numbers, were . . . not much habituated to associated life." The remarks in the text apply equally to the verbal confusion between "begetting" and "making," attributed to early man.

imperfect, and political authority non-existent, or very limited in extent, a sanction for morality will be sought at the hands of the gods. Nay, even where such organization and authority have reached, as in the Rome of early times, a comparatively advanced stage, religion will still be invoked to supply the defects of law¹. And not only may ancestral spirits be called upon for this purpose², but in contravention to the expressed opinion of Mr. Lang³, recourse may be had to spirits confessedly malignant, such as the Bhutas of Western India, referred to by Mr. Spencer⁴: “Various disputes and litigated matters, especially when evidence and ordinary means of adjustment fail, are then brought forward and submitted to the decision of the Bhuta, and his award, pronounced through the Dhér, is generally, though not always, submitted to⁵.” But a god invoked in the interest of peace and justice will come in time to be conceived as a righteous god. On this view the moral or at least judicial character of the deity will reflect the needs of social life and the ethical capacities of human nature in this stage of its evolution. But here, perhaps, we ought to distinguish between the benevolence ascribed to One who is conceived as Maker⁶ and the justice imputed to him who is invoked as Judge⁷.

Prof. Menzies, in his *History of Religion*, published in 1895, remarks (p. 108):—

“The objects of worship in the Chinese religion arrange

¹ Mommsen, *History of Rome*, Eng. trans., ed. 1894, vol. I, pp. 225, 226.
Cf. Ex. xviii. 13-27, Deut. xvii. 8-13.

² *Data of Sociology*, § 144, and § 197, p. 390.

³ e. g. *Making of Religion*, p. 185; *Folk-Lore*, X, 45.

⁴ *Data of Sociology*, App. A, pp. 783, 784, citing M. J. Walhouse *J. A. I.*, vol. V, pp. 408-422.

⁵ We should, in such a case, “toss up,” but by early man “luck” is ascribed to a supernatural decision, and the lot is, in origin, a religious institution. Prov. xvi. 33, וְשָׁפֵר בְּנֵי יִהְוָה, “Every decision which it gives is from Jahveh.” See Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*, I, 78.

⁶ *Making of Religion*, p. 199. *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, new ed., pp. 330, 331.

⁷ *Making of Religion*, p. 193.

themselves in three classes. The Chinaman of old worshipped, and his descendant of to-day worships still—

1. Heaven.
2. Spirits of various kinds, other than human.
3. The spirits of dead ancestors."

A certain ambiguity attends the first of these conceptions, though perhaps the obscurity exists rather in the minds of European scholars than in those of the native Chinese. It is disputed which is prior, the "animistic" notion of Thien (Heaven) or the more personal idea of Shang Ti, the Supreme Lord. On this point Prof. Legge differs from Confucius, Dr. Tylor from Legge, Mr. Lang from Tylor¹. "The early Catholic missionaries argued that the Chinese Shang-ti was equivalent to the Christian 'God,' and signified a being other than the sky, the Supreme Power of the universe. The Chinese, however, denied that they had ever made any such distinction, and declared that they could not understand it."² For my part I sympathize with the Chinese. Why are we to separate, on their behalf, what they do not separate? It is clear that from their point of view Heaven is the Supreme God, and the Supreme God is identified with Heaven, as well as with the universal order, and the over-ruling providence which makes for righteousness and directs the destinies of Man. Above the host of Spirits, "ancestral" or "animistic" they discern the presence of a unique and moral World-Power. It is natural that Mr. Lang should seek to affiliate such a conception to those of which he has made himself the exponent, as Mr. Spencer has been the exponent, of ancestor-worship, and Dr. Tylor of animism. I am only here concerned to note the actual coexistence of these three orders

¹ *Prim. Cult.*, II, 352. *Making of Religion*, 318.

² Menzies, p. 109. Cf. Legge, *The Religions of China* (1880), p. 66. There is a further question as to the word "Ti," whether primarily applied to the Emperor (Hwang Ti) and derivatively to the Ruler above, or as Prof. Legge thinks, signifying primarily God and applied to the Emperor as *Divus*. (*S.B.E.*, III, xxvi).

of belief, and to ask to which of the three should we refer the origins of the religion of Israel?

I fear there exists no evidence adequate to decide the issue. Mr. Lang's "theory of Jehovah" rests almost wholly on analogy (*Making of Religion*, chap. xvi). He asks warmly:—

Have critics and manual-makers no knowledge of the science of comparative religion? Are they unaware that peoples infinitely more backward than Israel was at the date supposed have already moral Supreme Beings acknowledged over vast tracts of territory? Have they a tittle of positive evidence that early Israel was benighted beyond the darkness of Bushmen, Andamanese, Pawnees, Blackfeet, Hurons, Indians of British Guiana, Dinkas, Negroes, and so forth. Unless Israel had this rare ill-luck (which Israel denies) of course Israel must have had a secular tradition, however dim, of a Supreme Being (*ibid.*, pp. 312, 313).

Whence came the moral element in Jehovah? One may surmise that it was the survival of the primitive divinely sanctioned ethics of the ancient savage ancestors of the Israelite, known to them, as to the Kurnai, before they had a pot, or a bronze knife, or seed to sow, or sheep to herd, or even a tent over their heads (*ibid.*, p. 315).

If savage, nomadic Israel had the higher religious conceptions proved to exist among several of the lowest known races, these conceptions might be revived by a leader of genius. They might, in a crisis of tribal fortunes, become the rallying-point of a new national sentiment (*ibid.*, p. 316).

Such, freed from some superfluous polemics, is Mr. Lang's argument. And at least the hypothesis deserves quite as much attention as the suggestions of Mr. Spencer and Mr. Allen on the same topic. It is a point of some importance in favour of Mr. Lang's view, that in the first chapters of *J*, while the conception of Jahveh is strongly anthropomorphic, he is yet represented as the Maker, *not* the progenitor of the first man. It is not easy to trace such a conception either to ancestor-worship or to animism, while, as Mr. Lang has shown us, it has its parallels in the beliefs of savages respecting a Supreme Being, conceived in the image of man. Mr. Jacobs, however, in his article on Junior-Right in Genesis (*Archaeological Review*, I, 339,

340), after observing that his own hypothesis does not apply to any of the earlier narratives of Genesis, goes on to say:—

The reason for this is tolerably obvious. A nation has legends about its eponymous heroes long before it deals with cosmological problems. This is only one of many indications which serve to show that the Hebrews had traditions about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, long before they speculated about the origin of the world (i.), of man (ii.), of sin (iii.), of death (iv. 1-15), of the arts (iv. 20-22), and of the diversity of language (xi. 1-10). The absence of any reference to junior-right in these legends would seem to indicate that they arose after the nomad stage, and in Canaan probably under Assyrian influences.

This was published in 1888. (I have not seen the reprint.) Of course no one would now deny the Assyrian or Babylonian influence. But would any anthropologist allow that legends of the origin of the world, of man, or of death, only come into existence with the growth of civilization? The evidence seems the other way. In dealing with these ancient cosmogonies we have always to distinguish between the system, which is the product of reflection, and the mythical elements of which it is composed. One of the simplest of these is the idea of the divine yet anthropomorphic Maker. It may well be of very great antiquity.

“Father Le Jeune, S. J., went first among the Algonkins, a missionary pioneer, in 1633. . . . He writes [in the same year] . . . ‘They say that one exists whom they call Atahocan, who made the whole. Speaking of God in a wigwam one day, they asked me ‘what is God?’ I told them it was He who made all things, heaven and earth. They then began to cry out to each other, ‘Atahocan! Atahocan! it is Atahocan!’¹.’”

What is very curious, they had a word *Nitatohokan*, meaning, “*I fable, I tell an old story*²”; in short, “I mythologize.” But their cosmology did not come from Assyria. Nor does it seem safe to assume that that of

¹ *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, I, 323.

² *Ibid.*, 324.

Israel was borrowed thence in its entirety, as a thing wholly novel to their conceptions.

It is a part of Mr. Lang's case that the primitive worship of a Moral Supreme Being has been overlaid by the subsequent growth of animism; just as in the view of the Reformers, the pure Gospel of Christ was overlaid by the complex system of the church and the accretions of popular superstition. In particular, the introduction of sacrifice in the worship of the Supreme God is to be regarded as due to the assimilation of his cultus to that of the ancestral ghost or totem. But it must be admitted that ancestral spirits play an important part in the *beliefs* even of the natives of Australia, and though it is true that the Supreme Being does not receive offerings at their hands, yet neither do the spirits, so that here this criterion fails. Another distinction, and from our point of view a very curious one, is that while the Creator seems to be normally regarded as possessing the bodily form of man, the ancestral spirits are considered, even by the rude Arunta, as so far immaterial that they may enter imperceptibly into the womb of a woman passing by their haunts, and thus be born again¹. Perhaps the difference is that between the living and the dead. But here two of Mr. Lang's witnesses have broken down under cross-examination by Mr. Hartland. Curr gives testimony, with regard to the Gippsland tribes (cited *Folk-Lore*, IX, 313): "The Creator of all that has life on earth they believe to have been a gigantic black fellow, who lived in Gippsland many centuries ago, and dwells amongst the stars. Indeed, many of the stars are named after some of their people long since dead." "Curr's conclusions," adds Mr. Hartland, "are not always to be trusted, and his knowledge of the majority of the tribes was second-hand and imperfect; but his presentation of the god in these words is to be preferred to Mr. Lang's." No wonder that the latter "bounded on his chair"!

¹ Frazer, quoting Spencer and Gillen, *Fortnightly Review*, April, 1899, 649.

The evidence of the other witness is still more unfavourable. "Mr. Howitt (before he was initiated) wrote: 'Tharamulun, after teaching his people the art which they knew [know?] and establishing their social ordinances, died, and his spirit (*Bulabong*) went up to the sky, where he has since lived with the ghosts'" (*Journ. Anthrop. Inst.*, cited in Mr. Lang's reply, *Folk-Lore*, X, 16). "But (after he was initiated) Mr. Howitt wrote: 'There is clearly a belief in a Great Spirit, or rather an anthropomorphic Supernatural Being, the "Master" of all,' and so forth" (*Journ. Anthrop. Inst.*, XIII, 458). Mr. Lang considers that the later statement is inconsistent with the earlier, and as *avocat de l'Être Suprême* demands an adjournment, pending the re-examination of the witness; after which it may be hoped that the Court will decree "the 'Existence of the Supreme Being,' and likewise '*ce principe consolateur* of the Immortality of the Soul.'" Ah, had but Robespierre possessed the *humanitas* of Mr. Lang, how different might have been the fortunes of Deism!

The student of religion is familiar with the fact that the conception of a great god usually combines elements derived from various sources, and often inconsistent with one another. It is very probable that the god of a Semitic confederation, who, according to their own traditions, had, in the course of migration, experienced the influences of the two great civilizations situated on the Euphrates and the Nile, may have thus united attributes which cannot be ascribed to any single origin.

If opportunity offers, I hope hereafter to examine the vestiges of Animism and of the Worship of the Dead in the Religion of Israel. In the meanwhile I will conclude this lengthy review of conflicting theories by an example of such syncretism drawn from the mighty deity who divides with Vishnu the adoration of modern Hinduism. As described by Monier-Williams, Śiva presents five distinct and seemingly irreconcilable characters. He is the destroying and dissolving power of nature; he is the eternal reproductive

power of nature, perpetually restoring and reproducing itself after dissolution ; he is the great ascetic ; he is (a modification of the first character) the terrible destroyer, delighting in destruction for its own sake, lord of spirits and demons ; while his fifth character is the entire reverse of ascetical—that of a representative free liver, a wild jovial god, fond of dancing and drink (*Hinduism*, S. P. C. K., pp. 92–95).

The destructive energies of the atmosphere exhibited in wind and storm, and personified in the Veda as Vāyu, Rudra, and the Maruts ; the all-consuming potency of time ; the fertilizing properties present in dew and rain ; the almighty agencies operating in creation, once personified as Brahmā ; the same agencies operating in re-creation and reproduction ; the power of asceticism once exhibited in the Buddha ; the grace of perfect beauty supposed to be specially present in Śrī or Lakshmī ; the mysterious efficacy of magic and illusion (*māyā*) ; the terrific agencies and operations of demons and spirits, and finally the all-pervading influence of the impersonal soul of the universe—all these have been collected and centralized in one god, whose chief name is the “Blessed One” (*Siva*) (*ibid.*, pp. 95, 96).

GREY HUBERT SKIPWITH.